

PUT YOUR GRAZING SYSTEM ON PAPER

As you can see from previous pages in this publication, grazing systems are made up of several components. To maximize the use of land and the management of grass and livestock, you'll want to have a written blueprint of your system—a plan. This plan can be in a number of forms, but should include certain items.

Inventory

Write down the number of acres, types of grass, soil types, health of the grass (excellent, fair, poor), sources of water and number of livestock in each pasture. This information gives a good picture of where you are.

Your goals

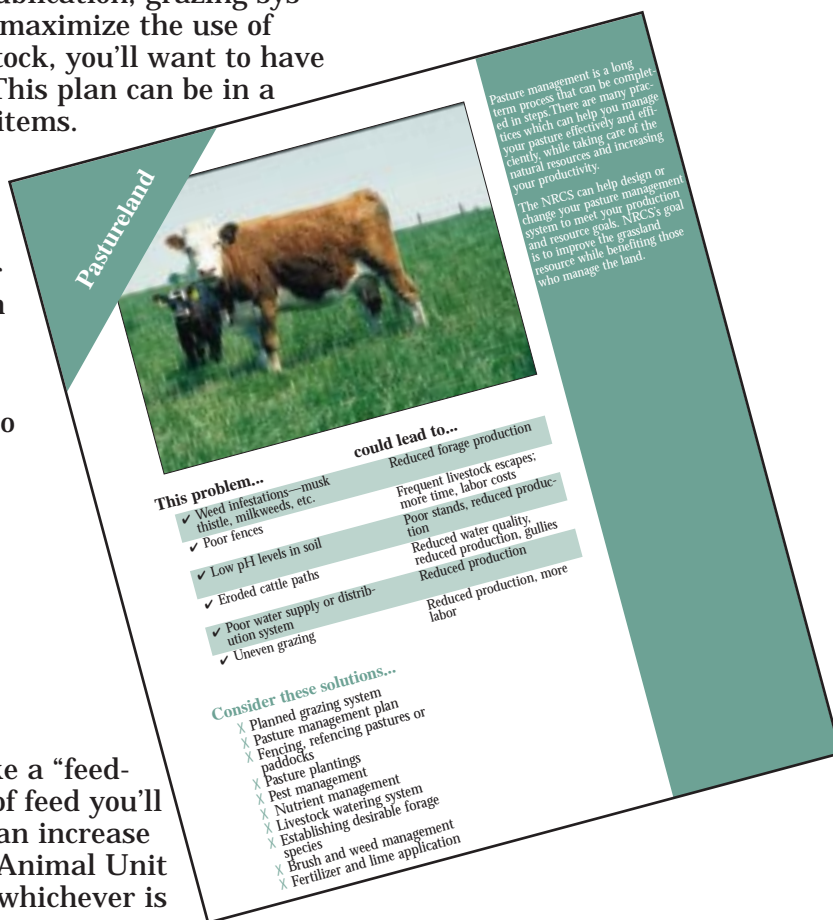
Think about what you want to accomplish. Do you want to:

- ✓ Graze more cattle?
- ✓ Get better gains?
- ✓ Improve forage quality during lactation?
- ✓ Leave livestock on grass longer—less feeding?
- ✓ Have more pasture options—separate herds?

Livestock needs

This section may take some time, but it is like a “feeding budget.” You should include the amount of feed you'll need for each month. Remember to consider an increase in feed needed during lactation. You can use Animal Unit Months (AUMs) or pounds of forage needed, whichever is easier for you.

Refer to Table 3 in the record keeping section on page 18 for samples to follow when calculating your livestock needs. Other samples will help you figure your pasture forage availability and hay or supplemental forage availability.



By fencing rivers, streams and ponds you can help to improve the quality of water for your livestock, your family and others downstream.

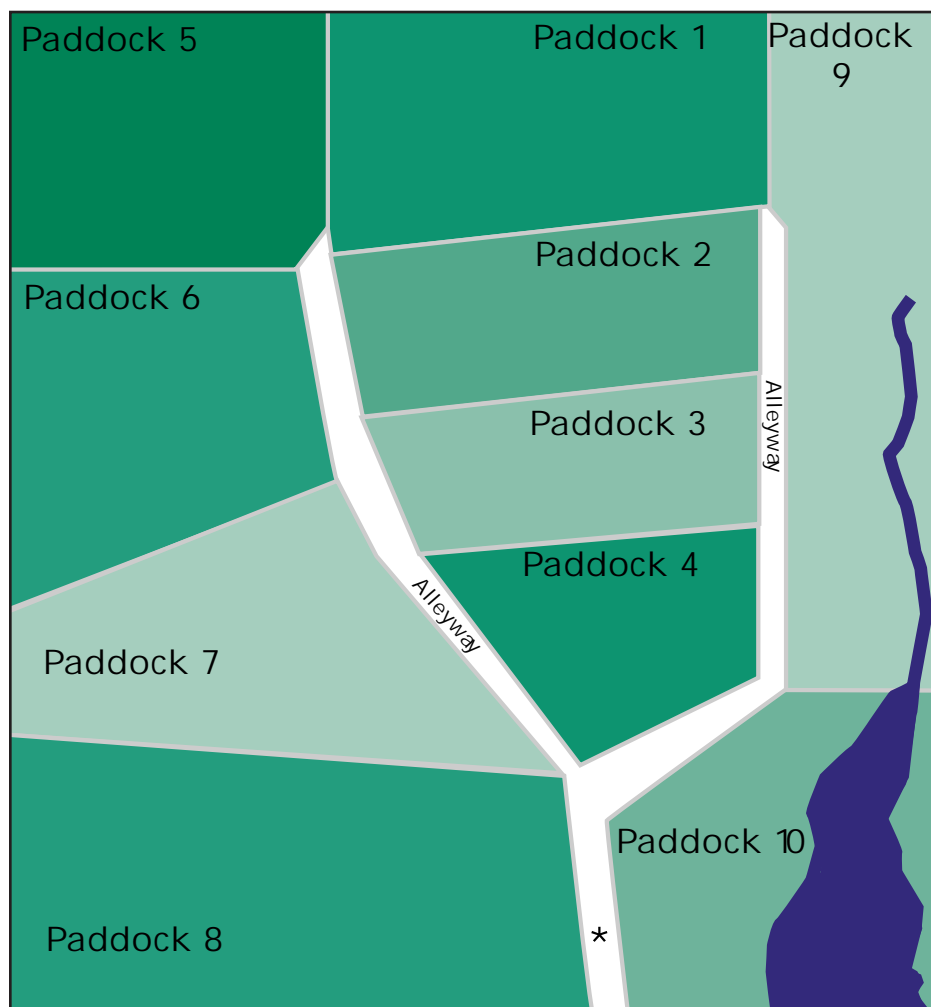
Matching needs to your goals

The next step is to decide how to meet your live-stock needs and start reaching your goals. If you aren't comfortable doing this step yourself, local NRCS, Extension or other pasture management professionals can help.

Remodeling your pasture

Consider the pasture plan to be a remodeling plan for your land. You may complete it all in one year, or take several years to build the system you want.

Consider your labor and management time available, because intensive grazing systems only work if they are managed properly. You're the only one who can really decide how much time you have to spend on your system.



**Nose pump waterer, piped from a large pond.*

Producers experienced in intensive grazing say livestock catch on quickly and once they are trained it doesn't take long to move them from paddock to paddock. If you are accustomed to regularly checking your livestock now, you may find that intensive grazing may not take a whole lot more time. Most people who have experience with pasture management systems advise others to start slow and build on their systems. This allows you to make adjustments and work into the management process.

Record Keeping

Keeping accurate records is a continual process in effective pasture management. The example on the following page (18) is a good place to start. You may also want to keep informal records of livestock type and number, forage height on the dates in and out of each paddock, and any other comments that may help trigger your memory in the future. This will help you track conditions of pastures and effectively manage each paddock over the long term.

In addition to keeping good pasture records, it's important to accurately track livestock performance. Local Extension Service offices, veterinarians and others can assist you to develop and use a live-stock record keeping system.